

## **Assembly Bill No. 962**

### **CHAPTER 688**

An act relating to speech-language pathologists.

[Approved by Governor October 14, 2007. Filed with  
Secretary of State October 14, 2007.]

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 962, Houston. Speech-language pathologists.

Existing law, the Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Licensure Act, provides for the registration and regulation of speech-language pathology assistants by the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Board. Existing law requires a person seeking approval as a speech-language pathology assistant to make an application to the board for approval.

This bill would express findings and declarations of the Legislature with respect to the services provided by speech-language pathology professionals and paraprofessionals. The bill would require the California Postsecondary Education Commission to assess and discuss issues, information, and barriers relating to, and progress made in the accomplishment of, the creation of additional speech-language pathology assistant training programs in a report to the Legislature. The bill would require the commission to confer with specified stakeholder groups in connection with this report. The bill would require this report to be submitted to the appropriate policy committees of the Assembly and the Senate on or before June 1, 2008. The bill would specify that the commission would produce this report using existing resources.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(1) Children and adults with a wide variety of accidents, illnesses, congenital defects, and cognitive impairments require speech-language and hearing services for their communication and related disorders.

(2) The need for speech-language pathology services is increasing with newborn hearing screenings, with the survival of premature babies, with increasing numbers of babies with fetal alcohol syndrome, with improvements in cochlear implants, with early intervention of growing populations of children with autism spectrum disorders, with improvements in augmentative and alternative communication devices, with advances in services for traumatic head injuries, with survival rates in throat and other

cancers, as well as a broad array of communication and swallowing needs of all age groups.

(3) The increasing critical shortages of speech-language pathologists across California's educational and health care settings prevent Californians with communication and related disorders from developing speech and language, from achieving success in personal and educational development, from achieving or returning to independence, and from successfully integrating into society.

(4) Persons with communication disorders who range from infancy to 22 years of age fall under the provisions of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C., Secs. 1400 et seq.), which requires public schools and other agencies such as regional centers to provide mandated services.

(5) Shortages of speech-language pathologists in public schools result in school districts expending scarce funds to contract out for services as well as utilizing limited resources for IDEA due process legal mandates.

(6) The shortages of school-based speech-language pathologists create unmanageable caseloads, excessive paperwork, and excessive workloads for school-based speech-language pathologists, further challenging public schools charged with the recruitment and retention of these professionals.

(7) Limited state and local education resources challenge current efforts underway to expand and create new innovative university master's degree programs to train additional speech-language pathologists.

(8) Seven California community college speech-language pathology assistant training programs have been initiated, and these programs have graduated over 400 speech-language pathology assistants.

(9) Many public school districts and county offices of education have incorporated these speech-language pathology assistants into their special education teams with appropriate classified personnel job descriptions, appropriate salary and benefit packages, continuing in-service and professional development, and recognition.

(10) Section 300.156 of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations (Section 300.156) establishes personnel requirements for special education "related services," which include speech-language pathology services and personnel.

(11) Section 300.156 requires that a state education agency ensure that paraprofessionals are adequately prepared and trained, and have the content knowledge and skills to provide to children with disabilities services that are consistent with any state-recognized certification, licensing registration, or comparable requirements.

(12) The Legislature of the State of California has previously recognized the necessity to expand and extend the services provided by existing speech-language pathologists with the utilization of trained paraprofessionals.

(13) The Legislature and the Governor enacted Chapter 1058 of the Statutes of 1998 (Assembly Bill 205 of the 1997–98 Regular Session), which created a trained paraprofessional category of licensed speech-language

pathology assistant, authorized to provide public school services under the supervision of a licensed or credentialed speech-language pathologist.

(b) Therefore, it is the intent of the Legislature to explore the development of additional community college speech-language pathology assistant training programs, and to require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to distribute information to school districts and county offices of education to encourage the appropriate utilization of licensed speech-language pathology assistants under the supervision of qualified professionals.

SEC. 2. The California Postsecondary Education Commission shall assess and discuss issues, information, and barriers relating to, and progress made in the accomplishment of, the creation of additional speech-language pathology assistant training programs in a report to the Legislature. With respect to this report, the commission shall consult with stakeholder groups including, but not necessarily limited to, the California Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Board, the California Speech-Language-Hearing Association, the California School Employees Association, and the Association of California School Administrators. This report shall be submitted to the appropriate policy committees of the Assembly and the Senate on or before June 1, 2008. The commission shall produce this report using existing resources.